Surára
Pakidái

/89 cont./

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437. (cont.)
Pharmakologischen Institut der Universität Hamburg is at present still analyzing the powder that I brought back. The result is to be published later in an article.

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[463]
[415]

Exactly like the arrow poison, this powder is made only by certain men. It is stored in bamboo tubes -- tõra -- (Fig. 28a) which are closed with leaves. Before prayers, on the occasion of big festivals, and before curing the sick, in which several men take part, besides the chief, the powder is poured on a large clay plate left by the Xiriâna. From here it is then packed into the bamboo snuff-tube 60-70 centimeters long, on one end of which is glued by means of tree resin a perforated, longish palm nut (Fig. 28b). At the free end the nut is sharpened to a point so that the man wishing to take snuff can insert it into one nostril. From the other end /Fig. 28 appears here/ of the tube, a friendly fellow-tribesman, with partly bent knees, blows the powder with all of his might into the man's nose (Ill. 44).

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After only a few minutes the snuff-taker falls into an inconceivable state of intoxication, in which he rages, screams, sings, dances, and leaps about (Ills. 45, 46). Since I was obliged, after my adoption into the tribe of the Surára, to submit to this usage also, I am in a position to describe the effect in detail. I should like to point out briefly here that immediately afterwards I developed a splitting headache and felt a strong desire to vomit, exactly like the youths making their first acquaintance with this drug. But shortly after that a strange reaction took place within me, for I felt myself to be a giant among giants. All the human beings near me, as well as dogs and parrots, suddenly seemed to be giants. This effect, which is caused by the alkaloids in the powder, is closely connected with the conceptions of gigantic animal and plant spirits (see pp. 201/201).

11: Chagnon E-5 (1964-1968) 1968 SQ18 Yanoama SQ18

black, heavy, and very brittle. It breaks easily, but the pieces are used by the men as grinding surfaces for their drug manufacture, or as baking dishes when the women make cassava bread. As we shall see below, only a few villages make the clay pots and trade them to the members of other groups.

The most distinctive feature of Yąnomamö technology is that it is very direct.[4] No tool or technique is complicated enough to require specialized labor or raw materials. Each village, therefore, can produce every item of material culture it requires from the jungle resources immediately around it. That is, the simplicity of the tools, the processes of manufacture, and the distribution of resources are such that each village can exist independently of its neighbors as far as technological requirements are concerned. Nevertheless, some specialization in trade and manufacturing does occur, but it seems to be more closely related to the development of political alliances and is therefore discussed in a later chapter. I will describe the material culture at this point and relate it to the over-all adaptation later in this and following chapters.

WEAPONS Wood for bows is obtained from two species of palm tree, one that grows wild and one that is cultivated.[5] The bow is very heavy because palm wood is extremely dense. One cannot, for example, drive a nail into palm wood. The fibers that go into the thick bowstring come from the inner bark of a tree; these are twisted into a cord by rolling them with the palm of the hand against the thigh. The cord is so strong when it is new that it can be used as a hammock rope, but it deteriorates with age and must be replaced periodically. The bow itself is shaped with the lower jaw of a large, wild pig. The canine teeth in the pig's lower mandible are worn to razor-sharp edges by chewing and make magnificent cutting tools; the bow stave is held vertically and the mandible is planed up and down the surface, each upward stroke shaving off a fine layer of wood. After much labor and patience, the bow is completed. It has a circular or oval cross section and is very difficult to draw. Most Yąnomamö bows would compare favorably to our best hunting bows in strength.

Palm wood is also used for one type of arrow point. A splinter of palm wood about 15 inches long is smoothed down to a fine point, and several lateral grooves are cut into it along its length. This is done so that the point will break off in the body of the target. This type of point is covered with curare poison, which slowly dissolves in the animal (or man) after the point has broken off. This point is used most frequently for monkey hunting, as monkeys tend to grab hold of branches and tree trunks when they are wounded. The curare relaxes their muscles, and the monkeys sooner or later fall to the ground. Unless the point were coated with curare, the animal might die high in the treetops and could not be easily recovered. The Yąnomamö also carry large supplies of extra palm points in their bamboo quivers since these points break whether or not the arrow strikes the intended target. This type of point is manufactured in large quantities in several villages and is traded to other groups.

The curare vine is also collected wild from the jungle. It is soaked in hot water to leach out the active ingredient. The water containing the poison is then painted onto the palm-wood points over glowing coals; the water evaporates, leaving a brown, sticky

[4]For more details on Yąnomamö material culture than are given here, see Becher (1960) and Zerries (1964).

[5]The cultivated palm, *pijiguao*, produces a desirable fruit. It is cultivated for the fruit, but the wood of dead palms is used in bow manufacturing.